

2008 SKYWARN™ Recognition Day

The 2008 SKYWARN™ Recognition Day was celebrated at the National Weather Service (NWS) Tampa Bay Area Weather Forecast Office (WFO) in Ruskin, FL on Friday and Saturday, December 5th and 6th, 2008. The event was a huge success, as several SKYWARN™ volunteers and amateur radio operators stopped by the office for tours and to help operate the Ruskin WFO amateur radio station, WX4TOR.

SKYWARN™ Recognition Day was developed in 1999 by the NWS and the American Radio Relay League. It celebrates the contributions that volunteer SKYWARN™ radio operators make to the NWS, and ultimately, to the general public during significant weather events. Over 100 NWS offices participated in SKYWARN™ Recognition Day this year.

In addition to offering tours of the NWS to local SKYWARN™ volunteers, one of the main components of SKYWARN™ Recognition Day featured communications with amateur radio operators all over the world. Their goal was to try and contact as many NWS stations as possible. The Ruskin WFO logged 137 contacts and reached radio operators all across North America. High frequency radio wave propagation was good during the event, as the Ruskin WFO contacted other amateur radio operators in 39 different states, one Canadian province, and 20 different NWS offices.

Special thanks is extended to everyone who helped make this event a success, including the NWS staff who worked shift during the event, and those who helped operate WX4TOR:

- Jason Triolo, KD4ACG – SKYWARN™ Volunteer
- Rudy Rude, KE4EXL - NWS Forecaster
- Todd Barron, KJ4FUF – NWS Met Intern
- Tony Reynes, KJ4FUO – NWS Forecaster
- Nick Petro, WX3H – NWS Sr. Forecaster

Special thanks is also extended to Dave Chaffin, NWS Electronics Tech, who extended our radio antenna cable into the conference room, and to Bud Fislar, NWS Electronic Systems Analyst, who helped resolve networking issues for setting up the Echolink program on our ham radio computer.

The Ruskin WFO is unique in that 12 of its 26 staff members are licensed amateur radio operators. Amateur radio was the only means of communication immediately after the land fall of hurricanes Katrina and Charley. When ordinary communication methods fail, amateur radio steps in to provide critical communication links. Given that 90% of all presidentially declared disasters are weather related, the Ruskin WFO recognizes the need for trained amateur radio operators among its staff, who will be able to better communicate with other amateur radio operators in times of crisis. The Ruskin WFO has HF, VHF, UHF, and digital radios, and is able to communicate both short and long distances on amateur radio frequencies and using emergency backup power. The radio station is routinely used for SKYWARN™ spotter operations and informational weather nets. For more information about the Ruskin WFO SKYWARN™ and amateur radio programs, please visit the SKYWARN™ link at: <http://weather.gov/tampa>.

Amateur radio operators who participated in the 2008 SKYWARN™ Recognition Day can send in their contact log information for a nice 8 1/2 x 11 inch certificate which recognizes their participation in the event based on how many NWS stations were contacted. For more information, please visit the SKYWARN™ Recognition Day web site at: <http://hamradio.noaa.gov>.

Included below are some pictures from the event. Overall, it was a lot of fun and a big success. Thanks again to all who participated and helped out!



Nick Petro, WX3H, makes several long distance contacts during 2008 SRD



**Nick Petro, WX3H, on the left utilizing Echolink to make contacts.
Jason Triolo, KD4ACG, on the right making local contacts on VHF.**